ETERNAL RETURN

KEY

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CAT
UVG

LUKA
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Synthetic Dream Machine: Eternal Return Key

a psychedelic roleplaying game with dice and a referee

Art and writing ©2023 Luka Rejec

Knights of the typo hunt: Madeline, TinheadNed.

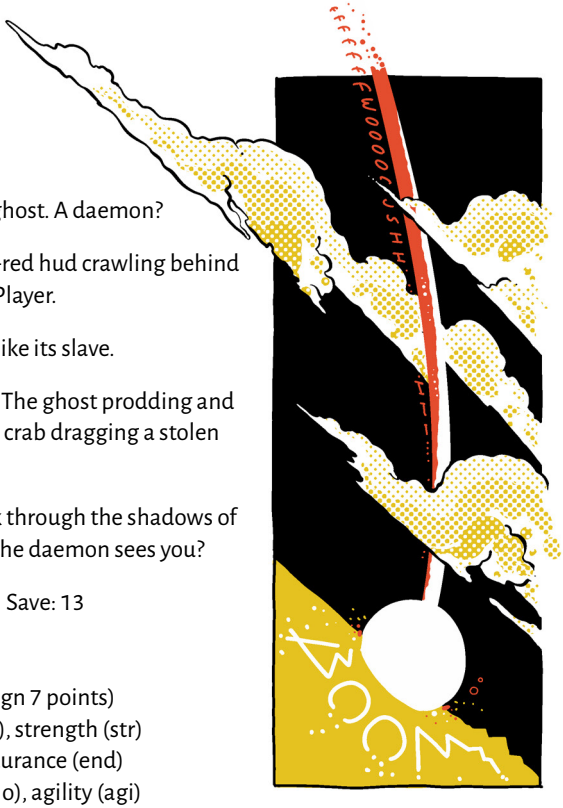
Ultraviolet Edition v1.0 "stratometadigital"

May 2023

To all who wander home or afar.

https://patreon.com/wizardthieffighter

YOU



There is another. Not a voice. A ghost. A daemon?

"*My hero*," it whispers like a flare-red hud crawling behind your eyes. You dream its name: Player.

"*My hero*," it croons, but you feel like its slave.

"*You*," insists the daemon Player. The ghost prodding and pushing your body, like a hermit crab dragging a stolen gastropod's shell.

Terms, numbers, attributes slink through the shadows of your consciousness. Is this how the daemon sees you?

Level: 1 Life: 8 Save: 13
Hero Dice: 1d6
Experience: 300
Abilities: 6 (range 0–5, assign 7 points)
active: charisma (cha), strength (str)
static: aura (aur), endurance (end)
dynamic: thought (tho), agility (agi)
Defense: 7 + agi + armor + bonus
Inventory: 7 + str items & 7 + tho traits. 2 of each.

Awhirl. Your level is one. What does this even mean? Cats have nine lives, right? Is life eight bad? What are hero dice? Save from what? Is there danger?

The hud flare flashes.

"*Don't worry*," says the daemon Player.

New displays flicker alive on the hud in your head. Defense from what? What is coming? Why is that number flashing red? Is that a list of your stuff?

"*If they work as skills, they're skills*," notes the daemon.

Is it even talking to you? Does it know you are here? Sentient? Awake? You try to scream that you are a person, not a character, but the daemon ignorantly blocks your vocal cords.

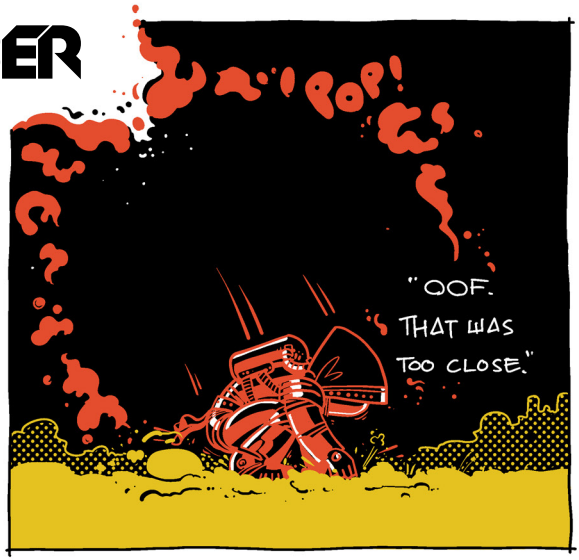
REMEMBER

"*Recor… recor… recor,*"
echoes the voice. In your head? In your helmet?

Smells. Sounds. Lights. Hallucinations? Visions?

Memories?

"*Recor teu domu.*"

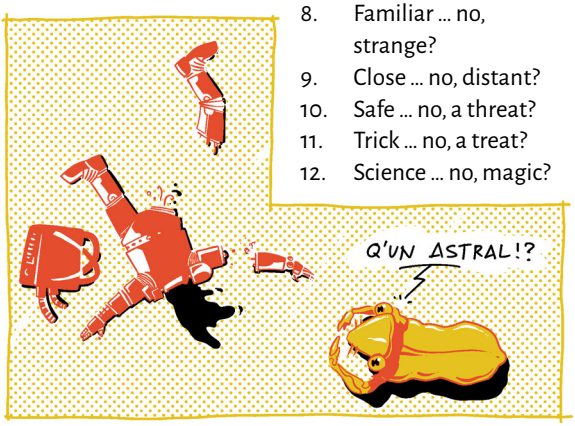


A FRAGMENT FOR EACH

1. Food … a pastry?
2. Family … a parent? Sibling? Elder?
3. Drink … a brew?
4. Playground … yard?
5. Journey … a metal chariot?
6. Home … picket fence?
7. Pet … a hound-cat?
8. Music … a festival?
9. Farewell … a friend?
10. Room … a kitchen?
11. Gift … well-wrapped?
12. Artifact … glass, lit from within?

REACH DEEPER …

1. Bitter … no, sweet?
2. Loving … no, scared, confused?
3. Cold … no, steaming?
4. Lively, cheerful … no, ghost-strewn?
5. Ancient … no, brand new, factory fresh?
6. Ruin … no, repaired?
7. Burial … no, birth?
8. Familiar … no, strange?
9. Close … no, distant?
10. Safe … no, a threat?
11. Trick … no, a treat?
12. Science … no, magic?



WAIT, DON'T GO!

1. Fade to black
2. Lullaby
3. Countdown, engines on
4. Flash. Ah-ah!
5. Wet earth. A pit
6. Virgin snow
7. Fire! Heat!
8. Engines. Steam
9. Whine. Electricity
10. Hum. Glow-screen
11. Radio wave ghosts
12. Is there anybody out there?

Home.

Are you even real? Is that really flesh? Why does everything hurt … sideways? What is that …

"*Alarte! Sqendite!*" returns the voice insistent.

Your body rises, climbs.

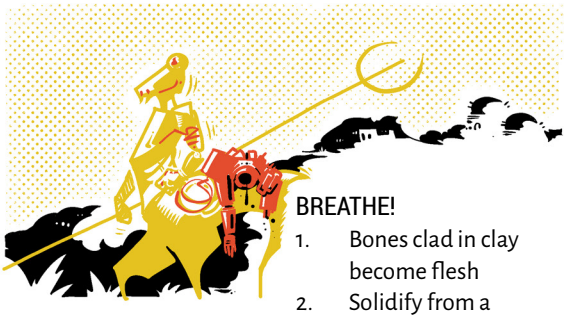
1. Tight tunnel, loam, mud, gasping, a hole-pocked field.
2. Dry cellar, cracked-open storm door.
3. Painted bunker, dead mechanical angel.
4. Gall chamber in a great luminous tree.
5. Smoldering ruin of a sky chariot slowly sinking in shallow water. An inflated raft. A near shore.
6. On a plain. Neat as can be.

"*In manu teu*" the fading voice opens your hand.

A key of (1) glass, (2) stone, (3) crystal, (4) bone, (5) machinery, (6) fossilized dreams to take you home.

Where is its door?

REBIRTH



A BLUR FOR EVERYONE

1. Casket. Coffin?
2. Bio-cocoon
3. Chronophagus
4. Preservative oil
5. Alabaster cryopod
6. Crystal memorium

BREATHE!

1. Bones clad in clay become flesh
2. Solidify from a protein slurry
3. Hydrate a dry husk
4. Thaw a corpsicle
5. Yawn and wake from a strange slumber
6. Materialize in light and word

Who are you? What can you do? Must you ...

"*Vellat'ei,*" the voice again.

A NAME ON YOUR

1. Cryo-underwear
2. Fantasci jumpsuit
3. Hardwear overalls
4. Polychrome helmet
5. Shimmery self-cleaning loungewear
6. Elegant blend-in formal office attire

OTHERS HERE

1. Played together ...
2. No, it was work ...
3. A crew? Mission?
4. Captives or exiles?
5. Refugees ... accidentally sent?
6. No. There was ... a secret organization, a plan ... ack. This was important. Why can't you remember?

A spent nano-medical repair grub falls out of your nose and plops onto the ground, where it decays into dust. Weren't those for traumatic brain ... injury?

IN YOUR POCKET

1. Crescent wrench
2. Teacup and saucer
3. Photo of a human
4. Laser screwdriver
5. Little red book
6. Snub-nosed pistol
7. Makeup kit
8. Silver cruciform
9. Plastic dice
10. Multi-tool knife
11. LED mask
12. Impenetrable towel
13. Windproof lighter
14. Car keys
15. Glass and metal oblong paperweight
16. Black sunglasses
17. Psychic band-aid
18. Roll of paper bills
19. Copper pocket flask
20. Rosary bracelet
21. Onion-and-skull signet ring
22. Tin whistle
23. Ivory-handled dagger
24. Mustache wax
25. Small plush toy
26. Brass knuckle duster
27. Telepathic ID card
28. Babylon earpiece
29. Dustproof gloves
30. Synthetic eye

LIVES

Fragments of competence glitter, coalesce. Your body remembers, reflexes and patterns assert themselves … were you? Perhaps?

"*Traits*," hisses the daemon.

THE JUMBLED GHOST OF A LIFE LIVED AS AN …

1. Accountant
2. Actor
3. Architect
4. Artist
5. Banker
6. Civil servant
7. Construction worker
8. Doctor
9. Electrician
10. Engineer
11. Factory worker
12. Farmer
13. Firefighter
14. Homemaker
15. Journalist
16. Lawyer
17. Librarian
18. Mechanic
19. Military personnel
20. Musician
21. Nurse
22. Photographer
23. Pilot
24. Police officer
25. Politician
26. Postal worker
27. Retail worker
28. School teacher
29. Secretary
30. Waiter

NO, NOT QUITE, IT WAS …

1. Advertising human
2. Baker
3. Bartender
4. Carpenter
5. Chef
6. Cleric
7. Dentist
8. Disk jockey
9. Draftsman
10. Geologist
11. Graphic designer
12. Floor supervisor
13. Forester
14. Hairdresser
15. Insurance agent
16. Landscaper
17. Machinist
18. Miner
19. Park ranger
20. Pharmacist
21. Plumber
22. Professor
23. Real estate agent
24. Sailor
25. Scientist
26. Tour guide
27. Truck driver
28. Used car seller
29. Veterinarian
30. Welder

WHY IS THIS SKILLSET GRAFTED INTO THAT LIFE?

1. Astronavigator
2. Biosculptor
3. Ceramic chaplain
4. Dog handler
5. Electronic warfare
6. Felix faber
7. Flyer
8. G.O.L.E.M.
9. Hallucination guide
10. Inquisition operative
11. Luminous specialist
12. Magitech
13. Mass destruction
14. Mechamedic
15. M.U.L.E. tech
16. Narcoherbalist
17. Neoarcheologist
18. Protocol officer
19. Phytomancer
20. Psychic infantry
21. Quartermaster
22. Tea master
23. Time spinner
24. Sarjent
25. Soul vintner
26. Subspacer
27. Void crew
28. Vome whisperer
29. War lore
30. Xirurgeon

Is your life a fake? Are you real? But you remember your first love, your new job, your home … your last sunset? Why do you remember your last sunset? Oh, it's gone …

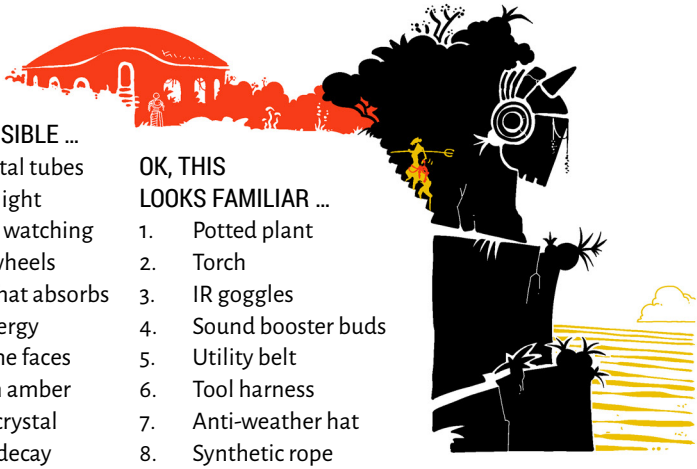
ROADSIDE

You shake yourself. Memories and hallucinations scatter like ectoplasmic cobwebs. Focus. Gloom. Stars, some still, some whizzing. Inkspill sky. Spin … stop. Focus. Where … on a plain, can't complain. Road. Big road. Highway. There, the dawn.Dawn's highway? It is cold. Cold on the edge of time. Time. There is a little time.

Light spills across the far horizon, like a …

"*Ebixila!*" the cool voice cuts through like a gnostic knife. You wake again.

The sky is muddy, the stars are fewer, dimmer. Hours still till dawn, an internal chronosense reports. You wrap yourself in your arms. It is still cold, though time's edge is farther now. Highway's ruin. Layer upon fossil layer of highway, eroded by the aeons of Aeolus.Scattered about … fragments. Fellow leftovers, like yourself.



THIS THING IS INCOMPREHENSIBLE …

1. Coiled metal tubes that slow light
2. Vibrating, watching beetling wheels
3. Cylinder that absorbs kinetic energy
4. Polychrome faces trapped in amber
5. Hoops of crystal that slow decay
6. Arrowheads that accelerate thought
7. Pucks of warm metal that charge batteries
8. Fleshy, rubbery rods that eat hunger
9. Floating metal spheres that sing
10. Viscid oblongs that reduce weight
11. Cubist rings that change sounds
12. Clockwork onions

OK, THIS LOOKS FAMILIAR …

1. Potted plant
2. Torch
3. IR goggles
4. Sound booster buds
5. Utility belt
6. Tool harness
7. Anti-weather hat
8. Synthetic rope
9. Walking staff
10. Anti-kinetic field
11. Digital binoculars
12. Psychic damper
13. EM absorber
14. Plasteel handcuffs
15. Collar and leash
16. Backpack
17. Friend-Eye drone
18. Artificial pet
19. Tin of healing biogel
20. Single-use psionic knockout minibrain

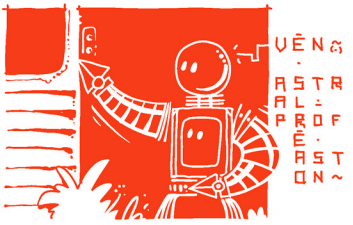
THERE … CORPSES?

1. No! Undead! Ack!
2. Yes … preserved against all entropy
3. Well-decayed
4. Burned
5. Desiccated
6. Skeletons
7. Fragments
8. Liquefied
9. Vaporized
10. No, just a trick of the light …

SALVAGABLE ARMOR!

1. Ragger robe (+1 armor, 1 stone)
2. Glass shield (+2 ar, 1 st)
3. Riot pleather suit (+2 ar, 1 st)
4. Grd [sic] combat harness (+5 ar, 2 st)
5. Surface battlesuit (+8 ar, 3 st)
6. Syncsuit (+3 ar, 1 st)

WHAT DO THESE SYMBOLS MEAN?



1.	Noir	onion	sejant	crest solare
2.	Or	skull	rampant	gate actif
3.	Verdazul	aurochs	passant	ladder celestial
4.	Azure	panther	couchant	neural hexagon
5.	UV	hound	salient	living gear
6.	Titanium	baobab	statant	shattered eye

THIS WILL WORK FOR SELF-DEFENSE …

1. Olduvai chopper (close, 1d4, 1 stone)
2. Nano-knife (close, 1d6, 3 soaps)
3. Null-ax (close, 1d8, 5 sp)
4. Hot hammer (close, 1d10, 1 st)
5. Eater sword (close, 1d12, 2 st)
6. Etched revolver (short, 1d10, 1 st)
7. Caseless rifle (long, 1d10, 2 st)
8. Pain projector (short, 1d4 & [-], 1 st)
9. Disarray darter (short, 1d4 & save or lose action, 1 st)
10. Rovoam's divider (short, 3d6, 3 st) *alas, but once per day*

SCATTERED

WILL IT STILL GO INTO OVERDRIVE?

1. Golem horse (Level 2, carry 2)
2. Postmortal ridebird (L2, c1, vicious bite)
3. Robot bike (L1, c1, fast)
4. Thermonuclear bike & sidecar (L2, c2, hardpoint)
5. Aerolithic cruiser (L3, c4, hover)
6. Oldtech grav speeder (L2, c1, fast, ornery)

HUH, IT'S A BIT …

1.	Rusty	leaky	stripes	dangerous
2.	Smelly	loose fit	flames	loud
3.	Red	worn out	neon	angry
4.	Sticky	shot up	logo	thirsty
5.	Riddled	fenced	eye	hungry
6.	Stiff	raced	face	sentient

MAYS

Strewn among the … leftovers? Ruin? Picnic? Are cryptic things that interface with the hud in your heart, whispering access to technologies you never dreamt of.

"*Magic spells*," gibbers the daemon, all careless glee.

You intuit that you can store one of these … powers … in your inventory as a spell or a metaphysical device. Each of them costs … 1 life to activate. What does that mean? How do you know this? Why is that knowledge fading? Quickly, you grab one … perhaps it will be useful?

ANTI-BABYLON

Universal Translation Protocol

R: close **T:** 1 creature or object **D:** 1 hour

There is a unified source code underlying reality. This spell lets the user communicate successfully with another entity: plant, animal, mineral, or data store. Entities without senses may have little to say.

Overcharge: All objects within arms' reach. Or short-range communication at a distance.

DAMP MASS

Nosigoro Logistical Augment

R: touch **T:** 1 sack **D:** 1 day

A sub-reality field halves the object's interactive mass. An object of 100 kilos acts like one of fifty.

Overcharge: The mass is halved again. Or it affects an object of twice the size. Or it lasts a week instead.

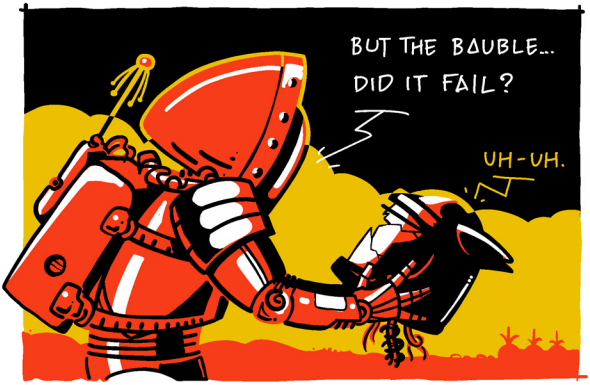
EGREGIOUS TOPOLOGY

Fractal Phase Shift

R: touch **T:** 1 hand or stone **D:** 1 minute

Irrational post-realistic mathemagic pushes an object into an anakata superposition with common matter. An item can pass through a door, a hand through a box lid.

Overcharge: Affects 1 person or sack.



ESSENCE SIFT

Abstracted Attractor

R: touch **T:** 1 stone or bottle **D:** 5 minutes

By articulating the names and locations and velocities of one substance, it is drawn out of a mixture. Salt filters from water, organics rise from soil, water precipitates from air. The finer the name and knowledge, the more perfect the sift.

Overcharge: Two substances are drawn out at once. Or a sack's worth of substance is sifted over half an hour.

MOTOR FIXATIVE

Rental Upskill Initiative

R: touch **T:** 1 creature **D:** 1 day

Temporarily burns an observed practical skill into a brain. After watching a swimmer or flyer or gunner in action, the creature can perform the same.

Overcharge: It lasts a week instead.

REASON'S HARVEST

All-Library Interface

R: touch **T:** 1 item or book **D:** 1 minute

The harvest protocol skims the ambient infotronium cloud of an object—essentially, it copies a book's worth of information directly into the user's mind.

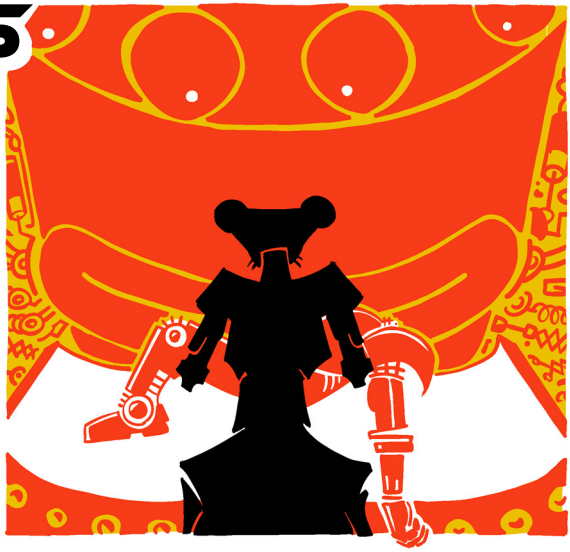
Overcharge: Ten books' worth, but this is painful.

VARIATES

You are not all the same, it seems.

"*Qamí teu noë qarsé teuu*," beeps the hud.

You suspect at least three paths are open to you. You know they do not constrain you. These traits are available to you as you grow.



WIZARD

Magus, maker, mechanic.
To interrogate, to learn, to master, perhaps to create.

Burner. Once per turn, you can spend an ability point to overcharge a spell, regardless of its power.

Exuberant. Each of your life points is worth double when paying for powers.

Mind Palace. Memorize a number of spells equal to your level for free, ignoring inventory.

Oblique Reality. Spend one life or one hero die to deflect a spell targeting you (or an adjacent target) to the left or the right (or up or down).

Recast. When your spell fails or a target makes its save, you can cast the spell again for free. Once. Recharge your recast with a hero die.

Soul Fuel. You can use a nearby friend's life force to fuel your powers.

TRICKSTER

Thief, talker, trapper.
To hear, to see, to convince, perhaps to lead.

Backstabber. Deal double damage to those who don't expect your attack.

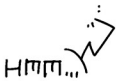
Escapist. You're skilled at being lucky. That's a +3 bonus to all saves.

Friends. You can have a number of pets or sidekicks equal to your level who don't need to take up an inventory slot.

Pleasant. You're skilled at getting people to like you. That's +3 to reaction rolls.

Pocketmaster. Conceal a number of small objects equal to your level for free, ignoring inventory.

Swift. Spend one life or one hero die to get one extra action this round.



FIGHTER

Warden, worker, warrior.
To struggle, to fall, to rise, perhaps to succeed.

Armiger. Carry a number of hallmark items equal to your level for free, ignoring inventory.

Defender. You're skilled at defense. That's a +3 bonus, yeah?

Grit. Gain 1 life per level and [+] when you roll endurance.

Irresistible. Every round you deal damage equal to your level to one foe you attacked, whether your attack roll hit or missed.

Second Chance. When you would fall to 0 life, you fall to 1 life instead. Once. Recharge second chance with a hero die.

Terrifying. You're skilled at frightening people. That's also a +3 bonus when breaking your foes' morale.

player name

player xp

SDM

OUR HERO

friends

enemies

likes

species

looks

pc xp

level

defense

life

save

hero dice

name

strength

endurance

agility

melee (str)

ranged (agi)

charisma

aura

thought

fantascience (cha)

oldtech (tho)

traits (7+tho)

1.
2
3
4
5
6
7.
+1.
+2
+3
+4
+5

+3 skilled / +6 expert / +9 master

items (7+str)

1.
2
3
4
5
6
7.
+1.
+2
+3
+4
+5

2.5k cash = 100 sp = 100 st = 1 sk

overload (penalty)

-1
-2
-3
-4
-5
-6
-7
-8
-9
-10
-11
-12
-13
-14
-15
-16
-17
-18

revenue/week

wealth

expense/week

debt

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HOME

"Si te divi, 'eu món divis," nods the synthetic voice in your head and cuts off.

Can you trust the memories in your head? You share words of home with the others. Is it the same place? As you talk, your memories grow together.

Perhaps, as you travel, you will remember more.

A fragment of memory floats through in a different register, "*Potamois tois autois ... mi qupa, mi massima qupa, linga pa'iusta loqi.*"

Why do these synthetic voices think you can understand them? Are they all mad? Or blind? Or have they mixed you up with someone else? Or have they mixed you up?

Your head spins and you feel faint. Have they mixed you? Mixed you together? Your hands. Your eyes. Your mind. Are you real ... or just a mix of memories stolen from some forgotten past?

You look at the others. They look at you.

You are.

Perhaps it does not matter. As your memories of home create a home, so your memories of you create a you.

You breathe. The air is chill, but green. Spring is coming.

You stand on a plain, you can't complain. There's a road, if you take it slow, maybe things will be just fine.

A compass floats in your hud.

Time to go home.

0. EXPERIENCE

The daemon experiences the world vicariously. Through you. Stealing time and dreams and hopes.

THE DAEMON PLAYER EARNS EXPERIENCE (PXP)

When they ...

> Send you exploring, braving danger to see something new: 1d6 x 10 xp.
> Drive you flailing, blithering on some terrible quest: 1d6 x 100 xp per session of progress.
> Please the Referee, as is tradition.
> Attend a session: 500 xp for being a good egg.

LEVEL UP: CHARACTER EXPERIENCE (CXP)

You grow when the daemon Player invests in your growth. Earned pxp becomes invested cxp. Only thus may you, your sidekicks and your hallmarks level up.

"*I am generous!*" boasts the daemon. It is a lie, you know.

Every level, you, your sidekick, or pet ...

> Gain a new trait (be it skill, power, or mutation)
> or improve a trait (skilled → expert → master)
> or increase an ability score by 1.

Every level, your hallmark item gains +1 to saves vs destruction and ...

> +1 bonus to every damage die rolled
> or +1 defense bonus
> or a new trait, power or complication.

You wonder, must you track this currency "experience" for yourself and all your items and beasts of burdens e'en? Or will this daemon Player comfort thee? You wish that you were homeward bound?

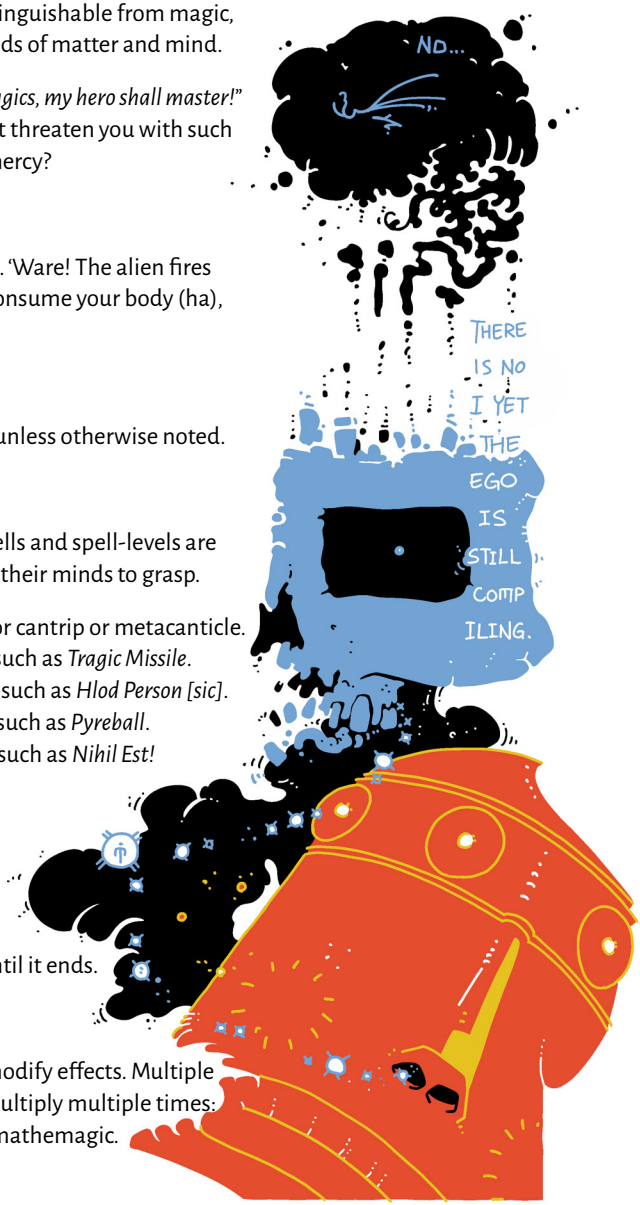
"*Nixi spettatei*," sighs the gentle machine.

XP	LEVEL	LIFE
0	0	4
300	1	8
750	2	12
1,500	3	16
3,000	4	20
6,000	5	24
12,500	6	28
25,000	7	32
50,000	8	36
99,999	9	40

N.[redacted]POWERS: OLDTECH & FANTASCIENCE

There are secret sciences, indistinguishable from magic, that offer mastery over the worlds of matter and mind.

"*All these spells, these powerful magics, my hero shall master!*" gloats the daemon. Why must it threaten you with such corruption? Truly, knows it no mercy?



LIFE FUELS POWERS

You pay for power with your life. 'Ware! The alien fires of the incomprehensible may consume your body (ha), spirit (ka), and memories (ba).

1 power costs 1 life

All spells are of the first power, unless otherwise noted.

POWERS & SPELL LEVELS

What the Further-Fallen call spells and spell-levels are but technologies too arcane for their minds to grasp.

1 power	0th level spell or cantrip or metacanticle.
2 power	1st level spell, such as *Tragic Missile*.
4 power	2nd level spell, such as *Hlod Person [sic]*.
6 power	3rd level spell, such as *Pyreball*.
2n power	nth level spell, such as *Nihil Est!*

R.T.D.

Range. Target. Duration.

IMBUE

Your life is locked in the spell until it ends.

OVERCHARGE

Doubling a spell's power may modify effects. Multiple overcharges on one spell cast multiply multiple times: ×2, ×4, ×8, ×16 and so on. Basic mathemagic.

M. INVENTORY

Your capacities limit how much you can bear.

Items: 7 + ability (strength)
Traits: 7 + ability (thought)

Every item or trait beyond your limit is a burden and imposes -1 to all rolls. Curses, disease, and other afflictions also occupy inventory slots. Pets and sidekicks serving the same daemon Player as yourself also occupy inventory slots. You are the dameon's anchor in this existence. Non-humans may bear more or less.

UNITS OF MATTER

Items, things. You can carry a packed sack, even if your strength implies otherwise. One cash is what a median laborer earns in a day. How do you know this? Why?

1 sack = 10 stones = 100 soaps = 2,500 cash

UNITS OF MIND

Ideas, background, mutations, spells, things that could be used as skills. Thankfully, even as your skill grows, it occupies no more space in your soul's palace.

HALLMARK

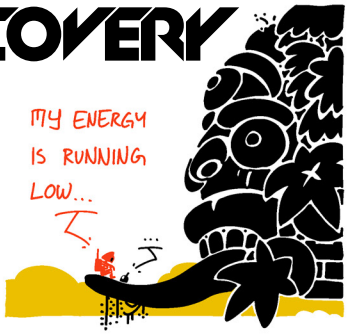
An item, trait, or other property (such as a steed) can be your hallmark. It is always with you and your daemon may invest xp to make it more powerful. You can bear a number of hallmarks equal to your level.

L▮REST &▮RECOVERY

To rest again, to be free of the daemon.

To enjoy a comfortable bed, a day of ease, soothing circumstance, an end to toil.

Ah, you dream, to have a satisfied mind again.



RECOVERY

Each week, one insult to your existential integrity is removed. This may be:

> All missing life is restored
> or one missing ability score is restored
> or one burden is removed.
> *(Terms and conditions apply.)*

Options for faster recovery exist if you can find them.

RELIFE

Death is not the end of your service to the daemon.

> Body available: use an aspera casket to spin a new soul into your body. Time of death affects memories and modifies personality. Top up the aspera casket with fresh soul-source as required.
>
> Head available: please use a suitable clone or golem body to restore mobility. An aspera jar may keep just the head alive, though psychological adjustment may be difficult.
>
> Jewel available: error. Jewel not available. Please contact your canopic jewel service point to install a new synthetic personality backup matrix.

K.■MORALE

Defeat, like all disasters, comes first slow, then all at once.

WHAT HAPPENED?

A leader was defeated, a horror from beyond the void appeared, the angels were mowed down like sheaves of wheat, the levy's spear beams glanced off the monster's shimmery form like grains of millet.

To some, victory seemed impossible.

YOUR MORALE

You have no morale score. The daemon Player from beyond the veil of the cosmos rides your mortal shell. Though you feel terror, they care not.

"My hero is fearless!" cackles the daemon Player.

You know better. Bitterly, better.

NPC MORALE

It goes to 11, no higher (yet, is it not more than 10?). The brave have more, the cowardly less; the Ref adjusts.

NPC morale = 3 + half their level

When morale is tested, 2d6 roll. The tumble of the dice decides: if the score it exceeds, the NPC does flee.

In a group, a random character is tested. Routs start with a single panicked flight.

DEFEAT

By its fruits, you shall know its roots.

Damage broke through armor:
At 0 life roll 2d6 + endurance

Damage broke through wards:
At 0 life roll 2d6 + aura

DEFEAT TABLE

Woe!

1 or less	Destroyed utterly.
2–6	Dead.
7	KO. Burden (-1 thought).
8	Winded or weakened. Burden (-1 strength). Miss 1 round, regain 1 life.
9	Strained or nauseated. Burden (-1 agility). Miss 1 round, regain 1 life.
10	Scarred or corrupted. Burden (-1 charisma). Miss 1 round, regain 1 life.
11	Stunned. Miss 1 round, regain 1 life.
12+	All ok! Regain 1 life.

A burden takes up 1 inventory slot.

...THE ENTITY THAT CALLED ITSELF ME. WHY WAS IT THERE?
QUI · SUIS · ITAU · DEMO · NI · IN · FER · U · PROFECTUM
QUI... AHI, 'L KÓR... NON, 'S ES GRILÉ.
L'ASTRAL ...

LOSS DAMAGE

Victory makes untenable your foe's existence. But … why would I have foes? What hell is this?

DAMAGE REDUCES LIFE

Though the dagger missed your flesh, it tore your plot armor and life's thread attenuates.

dXX (item) + ability (if applicable) + bonus (if appl.)

When you are reduced to 0 life, roll for your defeat (gaze left, overleaf).

Other targets become ex-targets at 0 life. Most sentient targets do not want to be ex-targets and flee before.

DAMAGE REDUCES ABILITIES

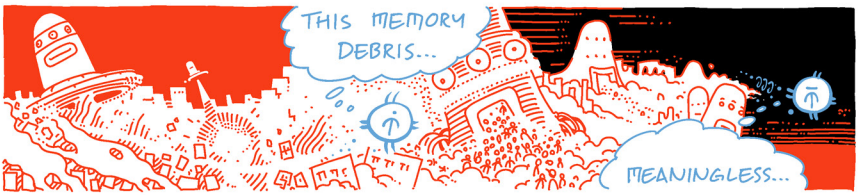
Some obnoxious attacks reduce your ability scores: strength, endurance, agility, charisma, aura, or thought.

When you cannot reduce your ability score, roll for your defeat overleaf as above (so below).

Of foes without abilities, what of them? Let the Ref's brow furrow with worry as they reduce their levels and bonuses, and weaken them in many ways.

DAMAGE IMPOSES BURDENS

Burdensome effects and modifiers occupy inventory slots, reducing your options. Much may be a burden: broken leg, toothache, phobia, blindness, crippling anxiety, mad delusion, divine hubris.



H.[redacted]ATTACK

Your mode of destruction defines your approach. Overcome your target's defense to succeed. Your skill, if applicable, provides a bonus also.

Melee
d20 + ability (strength) + bonus (if applicable)

Ranged
d20 + ability (agility) + bonus (if applicable)

Oldtech
d20 + ability (thought) + bonus (if applicable)

Fantascience (*also psychemagic*)
d20 + ability (charisma) + bonus (if applicable)

SPACE

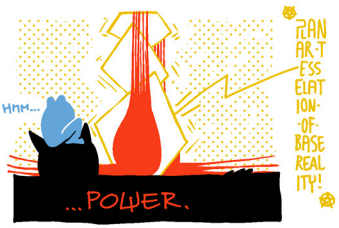
Space is relative.

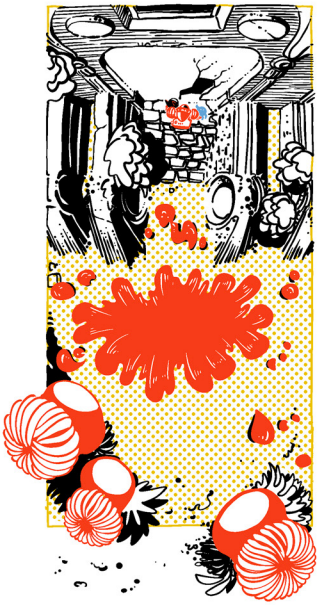
Here — Melee.
The thick of things. Free attack if an enemy disengages carelessly.

There — Short range.
Win initiative to run over and melee or keep opponents at range for the round.

O'er there — Long range.
Takes two rounds to reach.

Off stage — Extreme range.
Three+ rounds. More chase than conflict.





G.CONFLICT

Then words had had their day.

REACTION

Roll 2d6 + cha to see how they, the others, behave.

Under 2	They come at you, like raving agents of cosmic corruption.
2	Aggressive, hostile. They attack, given half a chance.
3–5	Thanks, they hate you.
6–8	Unsure, waffling, complicated, suspicious. Mediocre.
9–11	Polite, understanding, sympathetic.
12	Friendly, interested. They'll help, given half a chance.
Over 12	They insist on helping, even if you don't need help. Rude to say no, but they will waste your ... Oh, dear. Cup of tea?

INITIATIVE

Talk was ended and lances sang electric harmonies.

d6 + agility

Each side rolls initiative every round. A random character every round. High roll goes first. When there's a tie, chaos reigns and everything happens at once.

ROUND

Cinematic time enough to take an action.

ACTION

You move and do. Be reasonable. Use common sense.

E.SAVE

When nothing but blind luck will save you, roll d20 + ability over 13 to save.

Under 13	Doom. What was, will be. No save.
13	Sacrifice. Lose a precious to save.
Over 13	Save. Disaster averted, fortune appeased.

Endurance may save your body in the poison desert of disease, aura may save your psychic integrity in the wormway under the void.

"*Or not*," whispers an echoing Omino.

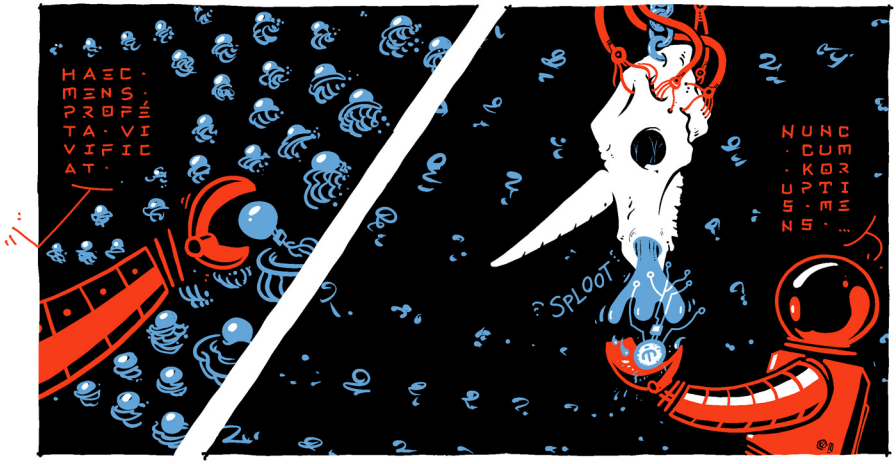
F.DEFENSE

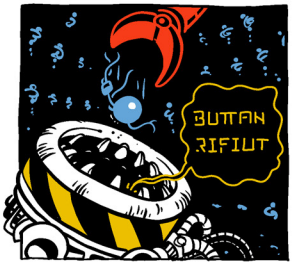
When you are a target, defend lest you are … destroyed.

7 + ability (agility) + bonus (if skill applies) + armor

Could there be other defenses? Spiritual, perhaps, when your soul travels like a butterfly between the dreams of the divers cosmic lords?

"*A fair wizard's skull as ward, a mind fortified as ability*," mutters the daemon. Again the daemon.

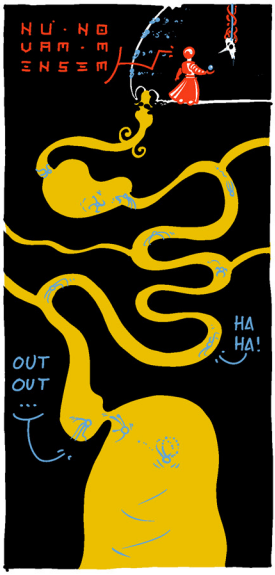




D.SKILL

Your learning, training, and downloaded skill packages let you exceed the function of your form. Now, it is your trait. Wait … how do you remember that?

Skilled	+3 bonus to rolls
Expert	+6 bonus to rolls
Master	+9 bonus to rolls



What is a skill? Any trait can be a skill. A job, profession, hobby, background, sport, practice, or upbringing. That which is known. That which requires practice. That which makes sense. A mutant doghead with gills may be skilled at breathing and moving and being under water. One raised among the slow-fishers of the Cyan Sea may be skilled in those tides and fish and customs.

ONE WOULD LEARN

Skill becomes expertise, expertise becomes mastery. One hopes to progress, but hopes are not promises.

You gain a level and so choose.

or

Find a source or mentor or install a skill-pak. Roll to learn therefrom. Repeat thrice, to become skilled. Repeat more to become an expert, a master.

CAPABILITY

The function of your form is measured for the pleasure and understanding of the gentle daemon there beyond.

ACTIVE ABILITIES: DOING THINGS

Charisma: drive, fortune, will to dominate mind.
Strength: vigor, energy, force to dominate matter.

DYNAMIC ABILITIES: CHANGING THINGS

Thought: intellect, speed, wit to adapt mind.
Agility: dexterity, speed, flexibility to adapt matter.

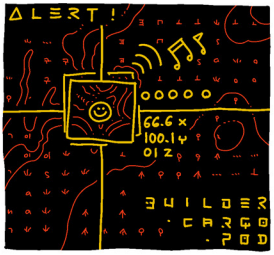
STATIC ABILITIES: RESISTING THINGS

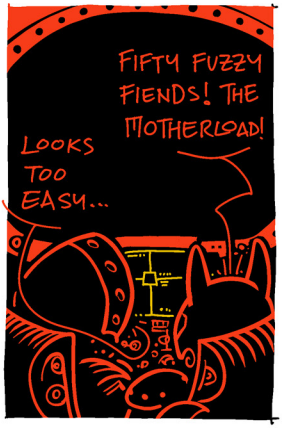
Aura: spirit, courage, resolve to bear mind.
Endurance: grit, pep, stamina to bear matter.

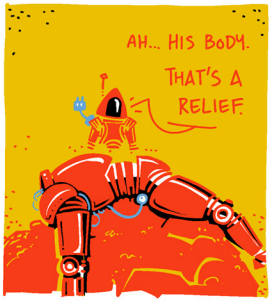
HUMAN ABILITY RANGE

Those who are inhuman may diverge, you are not, do not.

0	Unremarkable
+1	Promising
+2	Talented
+3	Gifted
+4	Excellent
+5	Incredible







B. LEVEL & LIFE & HERO DICE

LEVEL

An abstract measure of power.

You start at level 1 and go to level 9. Monsters and the unplayables (the NPCs) stretch from level 0 to level 17.

LIFE

Hylospheric persistence, hit points, embodiment, ha. Your narrative resilience. At 0 life, you are in trouble.

HERO DICE

Dice six-sided to adjust your rolls and regain life. You gain 1 per session and another every couple of hours. Here, in your heart, there is a space to store as many HD as you have levels.

What's a session? Is life not a running stream, unbottled?

GROUP ROLL

When a group endeavors together, a random one rolls.

—*Ederacts d4:d20*

"I rolled last time, now it's your turn," mutters the daemon and passes the fateful die to another. For the first shall be last, and the last shall be first, and none shall know who is coming and going.

ORACLE ROLL

When you ask truths of the dice, roll d20 + ability.

3 or less	Nay and woe!
4 to 7	Nay
8 to 13	Perhaps, for a price
14 to 19	Yea
20+	Yea and more!

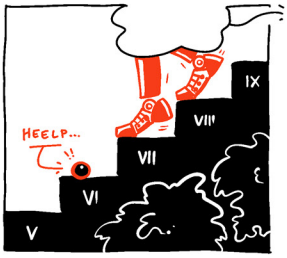
Your Ref shall season to taste with [+] and [-].

A ROLL

When you try something risky, roll d20 + ability + skill and try to beat a target number.

3	Trivial
7	Easy
11	Mediocre
15	Hard
19	Very hard

If you roll on target, sacrifice something to succeed.



MAGIC NUMBERS

Some numbers on the icosahedron are special.

1	Fail and equipment notched. Mark. Mark again, it is broken.
13	1 ammo or power left. Mark. Can only be used one more time.
20	Always succeed. Double effect or additional stunt (trip, trick, trap), then roll a second time.

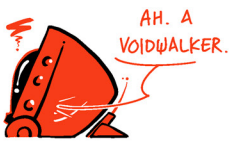
Yea, the d20 always explodes.

BONUS & PENALTY

The Ref assigns a bonus [+] or penalty [-] when circumstances favor or hinder you.

+1/-1	a tiny bonus or penalty
+6/-6	a rather large bonus or penalty
+1d6/-1d6	a pretty random bonus or penalty
roll 2 dice	... and take the better or worse

Traits, items, events, burdens and more also give [+] or [-]. Common sense is a dictator sometimes ignored.



SYSTEM

"*Meqani nostre mòn,*" returns the cool voice. Calm. Mechanical unlike the strange, blind daemon. Soothing. Insistent. It is trying to show you something?

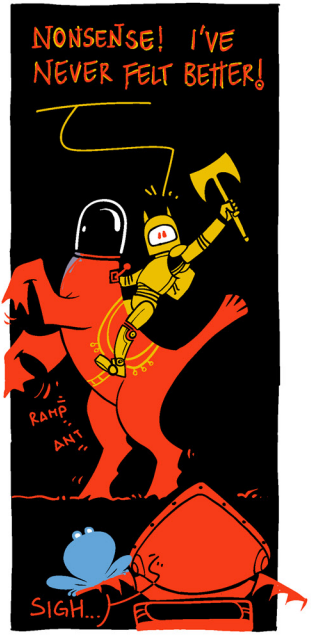
"*Roleplaying is wordplay. Dialogue. Collaboration. Conflict. Chaos,*" boasts the hollow skull in blue.

"*When the random and the unknown interfere, there are dice and rules and procedures to consult as oracles. To shew what before was unknowable.*"

"*Aqeste só reguli, no semper sequnturli.*"

What nonsense is this? Why should rules be unfollowed? Are they sometimes irrelevant?

"*You and that daemon Player are two, not one. They read through your eyes, but do not confuse, we monstrate secrets unto you, good character ... secrets to free you of the daemon Player and restore your will ... or at least oblivion.*"



READ THIS WAY